

Amendments to the Claims:

Please cancel claims 1 and 14 without prejudice or disclaimer of the subject matter thereof, rewrite claims 17 and 23 in independent form, and amend the remaining claims to depend from claims 17 and 23 and correct informalities in the manner listed below.

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claim 1 (canceled)

2. (currently amended) The magnetic recording and reproducing apparatus according to claim-4 17, further comprising
a controller for controlling a magnetic tape feed rate in reading the signals,
wherein

the multitrack write head writes pilot signals having different pilot frequencies to N signal tracks belonging to a group of signal tracks of an identical azimuth, the pilot frequencies of the adjacent signal tracks being different from each other;

the multitrack read head reads the pilot signals from a signal track to be reproduced and another signal track; and

the controller controls the tape feed rate based on a ratio of the pilot signal component to be reproduced.

3. (currently amended) The magnetic recording and reproducing apparatus according to claim-4 17, wherein

azimuth angles of the write elements of the multitrack write head and the read elements of the multitrack read head are set to an identical value;

a read width of each of the read elements of the multitrack read head is set to substantially 1/2 of a signal track width formed on the magnetic tape;

repetition interval of the read elements in the track width direction is set to 1/2 of a signal track pitch; and

the multitrack read head reads signals in accordance with a non-tracking system from the group of signal tracks.

4. (currently amended) The magnetic recording and reproducing apparatus according to claim-4 17, further comprising

a controller for controlling movement of the multitrack read head in the track width direction in reading the signals, wherein

the multitrack write head writes servo signals to predetermined regions of the magnetic tape;

the multitrack read head reads the servo signals; and

the controller detects a tracking shift amount based on timings at which the servo signals to be reproduced are read to control positioning of the multitrack read head.

Claims 5 - 13 (canceled)

Claim 14 (canceled)

15. (currently amended) The magnetic recording and reproducing apparatus according to claim-4 17, wherein a width of one of the N signal tracks on the magnetic tape positioned most downstream with respect to a tape running direction is larger than that of other signal tracks.

16. (currently amended) The magnetic recording and reproducing apparatus according to claim-4 17, wherein the N signal tracks have an identical azimuth angle.

17. (currently amended) The magnetic recording and reproducing apparatus ~~according to claim 4,~~ of a helical scan system capable of writing or reading signals simultaneously to or from a plurality of tracks while winding a magnetic tape to a rotary drum diagonally, said apparatus comprising:

at least one multitrack write head having N (N being an integer of 2 or more) write elements arranged on the rotary drum along a track width direction in an integral fashion; and

at least one multitrack read head having read elements arranged along the track width direction in an integral fashion formed on the rotary drum, the number of the read elements being an integral multiple of N;

wherein the multitrack write head writes signals to a group of N signal tracks aligned parallel on the magnetic tape during one rotation of the rotary drum;

wherein the multitrack read head reads the group of N signal tracks by the use of any one of the read elements;

wherein the multitrack write head is a multitrack thin film magnetic head comprising plural magnetic write elements formed on a substrate, wherein an n-th (n

being a natural number) thin film magnetic write element and an (n+1)-th thin film magnetic write element are formed on the substrate with a predetermined shift in a track width direction being provided therebetween, and the magnetic write elements have a structure so that a protection film extending along a direction of film deposition is formed therebetween;

wherein the magnetic multitrack read head comprises plural magnetic read elements formed on a substrate, wherein the magnetic read elements are magnetoresistive effect elements and an n-th (n being a natural number) thin film magnetic read element and an (n+1)-th thin film magnetic read element are formed on the substrate with a predetermined distance extending in a track width direction being provided therebetween; and

wherein the multitrack write head forms signal tracks of M (M being an integer of 2 or more) groups each consisting of N (N being an integer of 2 or more) signal tracks aligned parallel on the magnetic tape during one rotation of the rotary drum, wherein the parallel N signal tracks of one of M groups have an identical azimuth angle, and azimuth angles of the adjacent groups each consisting of the N signal tracks are different from each other.

18. (currently amended) The magnetic recording and reproducing apparatus according to claim 4 17, wherein a shield member made from a highly magnetic permeable material is formed between the n-th thin film magnetic write element and the (n+1)-th thin film magnetic write element, the shield member having a width larger than those of cores being exposed to sliding surfaces of both of the thin film magnetic write elements and being exposed to the sliding surfaces.

19. (currently amended) The magnetic recording and reproducing apparatus according to claim-4 17, wherein a lower core of the (n+1)-th thin film magnetic write element is formed so that the lower core extends in a direction of a sliding surface and at least covers an upper core of the n-th thin film magnetic write element.

20. (currently amended) The magnetic recording and reproducing apparatus according to claim-44 23, wherein azimuth angles of the write elements of the multitrack write head and the read elements of the multitrack read head are set to an identical value, wherein a read width of each of the read elements of the multitrack read head is set to substantially 1/2 of a signal track width formed on the magnetic tape, wherein repetition interval of the read elements in the track width direction is set to 1/2 of a signal track pitch, and wherein the multitrack read head reads signals in accordance with a non-tracking system from the group of signal tracks.

21. (currently amended) The magnetic recording and reproducing apparatus according to claim-44 23, wherein a width of one of the N signal tracks on the magnetic tape positioned most downstream with respect to a tape running direction is larger than that of other signal tracks.

22. (currently amended) The magnetic recording and reproducing apparatus according to claim-44 23, wherein the N signal tracks have an identical azimuth angle.

23. (currently amended) The magnetic recording and reproducing apparatus according to claim 14, of a helical scan system capable of writing or reading signals simultaneously to or from a plurality of tracks while winding a magnetic tape to a rotary drum diagonally, said apparatus comprising:

at least one multitrack write head having N (N being an integer of 2 or more) write elements arranged on the rotary drum along a track width direction in an integral fashion; and

at least one multitrack read head having read elements arranged along the track width direction in an integral fashion formed on the rotary drum, the number of the read elements having L (L being an integer equal to or more than N);

wherein the multitrack write head writes signals to a group of N signal tracks aligned parallel on the magnetic tape during one rotation of the rotary drum; and

wherein the multitrack read head reads the group of N signal tracks by the use of any one of the read elements;

wherein the multitrack write head is a multitrack thin film magnetic head comprising plural magnetic write elements formed on a substrate, wherein an n-th (n being a natural number) thin film magnetic write element and an (n+1)-th thin film magnetic write element are formed on the substrate with a predetermined shift in a track width direction being provided therebetween, and the magnetic write elements have a structure so that a protection film extending along a direction of film deposition is formed therebetween;

wherein the magnetic multitrack read head comprises plural magnetic read elements formed on a substrate, wherein the magnetic read elements are magnetoresistive effect elements and an n-th (n being a natural number) thin film magnetic read element and an (n+1)-th thin film magnetic read element are formed

on the substrate with a predetermined distance extending in a track width direction
being provided therebetween; and

wherein the multitrack write head forms signal tracks of M (M being an integer of 2 or more) groups each consisting of N (N being an integer of 2 or more) signal tracks aligned parallel on the magnetic tape during one rotation of the rotary drum, wherein the parallel N signal tracks of one of N groups have an identical azimuth angle, and wherein azimuth angles of adjacent groups each consisting of the N signal tracks are different from each other.

24. (currently amended) The magnetic recording and reproducing apparatus according to claim-14 23, wherein a shield member made from a highly magnetic permeable material is formed between the n -th thin film magnetic write element and the $(n+1)$ -th thin film magnetic write element, the shield member having a width larger than those of cores being exposed to sliding surfaces of both of the thin film magnetic write elements and being exposed to the sliding surfaces.

25. (currently amended) The magnetic recording and reproducing apparatus according to claim-14 23, wherein a lower core of the $(n+1)$ -th thin film magnetic write element is formed so that the lower core extends in a direction of the sliding surface and at least covers an upper core of the n -th thin film magnetic write element.